DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 434 376 CS 510 157

AUTHOR Dodd, Julie E.; Robinson, Judy L.
TITLE Implications of New Technology in Providing Training for High School Journalism Teachers.
PUB DATE 1998-01-00
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Mid-Winter Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (Charlotte, North Carolina, January 1998).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Distance Education; High Schools; *Internet; *Journalism Education; Secondary School Teachers; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Certification; Teacher Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Journalism Educators; *Scholastic Journalism

ABSTRACT

A survey of high school journalism teachers attending the Florida Scholastic Press Association convention found that 75% had access to the Internet at home and 56% had access to the Internet at school. Surveys and cover letters were distributed to the 120 advisers attending the 1997 convention; 39 advisers completed the survey for a response rate of 32%. More than half of the respondents said they would take courses for certification or recertification credit if offered via distance learning. The teachers' main concerns about distance learning courses were the time involved in taking the course and the cost of the course. (Contains 16 references, a figure, and a sample survey.) (Author/NKA)

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ED 434 376

Implications of New Technology in Providing Training For High School Journalism Teachers

Julie E. Dodd
Associate Professor
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida

Judy L. Robinson
Doctoral Student
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida

This paper was presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Scholastic Journalism Division Mid-Winter Meeting, Charlotte, North Carolina, January 1998

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Implications of New Technology in Providing Training for High School Journalism Teachers

Abstract

A survey of high school journalism teachers attending the Florida Scholastic Press Association convention found that 75% had access to the Internet at home and 56% had access to the Internet at school. More than half the respondents said they would take courses for certification or recertification credit if offered via distance learning. The teachers' main concerns about distance learning courses were the time involved in taking the course and the cost of the course.

Implications of New Technology in Providing Training for High School Journalism Teachers

Teachers who teach high school and middle school journalism and media classes[1] typically lack academic or professional training for their teaching assignment (Dvorak, et. al., 1994; Evanchyk, 1993; Freedom Forum, 1994). Nationally, 72% are not certified to teach journalism by the certification standards established by the state where the teacher teaches (Dvorak, 1994).

Courses offered by colleges of communications and college-sponsored summer journalism workshops would enable teachers to develop and practice media skills (journalistic writing, design, photojournalism, media law, etc.) that would make them more competent in their work with their own students. Yet, those traditional options have not provided the majority of journalism teachers with a route to journalism certification.

The reasons journalism teachers have not earned journalism certification vary. In some states certification in journalism is not necessary in order to teach journalism. Hence, teachers may not feel compelled to take college coursework for training. In some states, teachers must become recertified periodically but can gain that recertification through in-service training. They may pursue in-service recertification -- taking school-sponsored workshops on classroom management, curriculum development or teen health issues -- instead of paying tuition to take a college course.

Certainly two significant factors in a teacher's decision whether or not to take a college journalism course are the time required to complete the course and the location where the course is offered. As most journalism teachers are full-time employees, their schedules do not allow them to take most college courses offered, as most courses are offered during the regular school day. Taking a course in a summer workshop isn't feasible for many teachers because of the extra expense of traveling to the college campus and

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[1] Throughout the paper, media adviser will be used to refer to teachers who advise either print publications or broadcast programs.

staying in a hotel/dorm. Some teachers also cannot be away from families for even the condensed time of a summer workshop (typically one week).

But as education moves into the 21st century, the overall increase in computer and Internet use by the general population and the national initiative to utilize the Internet in education provide the opportunity to reach high school teachers for whom time and location have been the factors preventing them for taking journalism courses. As universities explore the market for distance education courses, public school teachers who must earn recertification credit are a potential population of non-traditional students.

This study was developed to help a college of communications evaluate the feasibility of offering courses via distance education to high school journalism teachers. The study was designed to determine:

1. Are high school journalism teachers interested in taking journalism courses through distance education courses?
2. What technology do these teachers have access to?
3. What courses are teachers most interested in taking to prepare them as journalism teachers?

Literature Review

In a national survey of random sample of 22,785 secondary schools, Dvorak (1994) found 28.2% of the journalism teachers were certified in journalism. Of the respondents, 78.5% were certified in English, 17.8% in social studies and 10.2% in speech/drama. The low journalism certification rate was due, Dvorak found, to the timing of when the teachers first considered going into journalism education. The largest response, 43.5%, said they starting thinking about getting involved in journalism education "after assignment by an administrator." These teachers already had completed their college degree and were teaching. So to earn journalism certification would require post-baccalaureate training. Although 85.4% of the journalism educators said they knew they

wanted to teach before their college graduations, only 39% had even considered journalism teaching during the same time period.

Journalism certification requirements vary greatly from state to state (Weaver, 1988). Some states have no journalism certification requirements at all. Others vary from requiring 30 hours of college courses to requiring only two courses.

In a survey of journalism teachers who were members of the Florida Scholastic Press Association, Evanchyk (1993) found that 23.9% of the respondents said they were certified in journalism. At the time of her study, the Florida Department of Education had raised the certification requirements from six semester hours of journalism courses to 12 semester hours but had "grandfathered" the teachers who had earned certification under the previous certification requirements (Dodd, 1992).

Technology access and use increasing

The increased access to and use of computers and the Internet by university faculty, university students, high school teachers and high school students provides greater ability to for the use computer-based instruction and Internet-based instruction in the education process (Green, 1996).

A national survey of teachers (IFIC Foundation, 1997) in grades 5-8 in public, private and parochial schools found 79% of the teachers had access to the Internet through school or home. Half of those without access expected to have it by the year 2000. Although the survey was targeted at science teachers, the findings reflect the widespread access to the Internet teachers had by 1997. The increased access is, in part, due to Bill Clinton's Presidential Technology Initiative with a goal being to have all schools connected to the Internet by 2000. The "Report to the President on the Use of Technology to Strengthen K-12 Education in the United States" said Internet uses in the classroom could include: preparation of classroom materials; monitoring, guiding and accessing students' progress; consulting with experts; and exchanging ideas, experiences and curriculum materials with other teachers.

Universities, too, are interested in the potential of the Internet to improve instruction on campus college classes and to provide education opportunities to non-traditional populations (Green, 1996; Johnstone & Vrauth, 1996; Monaghan, 1996).

In reporting the results of the sixth annual *Campus Computing* survey Green (1996) found almost a doubling of computer technology use in college classrooms from 1994 to 1995:

- E-mail in classes had increased from 8 to 20%
- The use of computer classrooms increased from 16 to 24%
- The use of computer simulations/exercises increased from 9 to 14%
- Instructor use of presentation handouts prepared with computers increased from 15 to 26%
- Using commercial courseware in the classroom increased from 11 to 18%
- Instructor use of multimedia in classroom teaching increased from 4 to 8%
- The use of CD-ROM-based materials in courses increased from 4 to 8%

A significant aspect of the increased use of technology was due to increased access to computers, Green said. Of college faculty, an average of 50% had access to a computer at school, with some campuses having almost all faculty having their own computers. Of college students, almost 33% had their own computers, with 80% having computers on some campuses. Students' experiences with computers at home and in high school help to prepare them for using computers in college: 40% of U.S. families own computers and the majority of college freshmen reported they received 1/2 year or more of some form of computer training in high school.

Steven W. Gilbert (1996), director of Technology Projects at the American Association for Higher Education, says colleges and universities are in the process of a slow revolution as mainstream faculty are adopting educational uses of computer applications and information technology. The signs of this revolution include:

- Growing belief of faculty, students, legislators and the general public that information technology helps improve the quality of teaching and learning and will improve students' career preparation.

- Legislators and regents providing less funding but stressing increased productivity.
- Faculty organizations developing policies to prevent loss of jobs and tenure from educational uses of information technology.
- Colleges and universities increasing their investment in computer- and video-related hardware.
- The percentage of students who refuse to buy the required textbooks for their courses has increased and is averaging 25 to 40 percent nationwide.

The concept of distance education is not new. Correspondence courses were (and still are on most university campuses) the approach to distance education -- providing a way to take college courses for those who could not be on campus to take the course in the classroom. But the introduction of graphical browsers in 1993 and the development of Internet-based instruction (such as listserv, chat groups, MOO and MUD groups) changes how courses can be presented which, in turn, provides incentives for a new range the students to become interested in distance education courses.

The largest initiative to use information technology for higher education is the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. Established in 1995 by the governors in eleven Western states, WICHE's goal is to create a virtual university for the citizens of those states (Johnstone & Krauth, 1996). Johnstone, who is the program's director, and Krauth, who is a research associate, argue that:

> The efficacy of technology itself is not in question; research and evaluation studies have consistently demonstrated that the achievement and satisfaction of students who learn via technology can equal those of students in regular classroom.

Gilbert (1996) says current research and evaluation studies do not exist to justify and support the educational advances made with information technology, but the "commitment to change based on accumulated experience is outpacing the availability of conclusive research results" (p. 10). Even without research and results, education is

moving to the inclusion of new media and information technology in teaching. Gilbert (1996) and Green (1996) both say that the use of information technology in teaching has moved beyond the stage of early adopters and now has reached the critical mass necessary to maintain the momentum of growth. Personal computers revolutionized computer use in the 1980s. Electronic mail and the World Wide Web have revolutionized computer use in the 1990s (Gilbert, 1996). It is likely that Web-based training will revolutionize computer based learning in the late nineties.

According to Brandon Hall (1997) business companies are quickly adopting intranet and Internet training of employees. Over a three to five year time period, companies are finding the costs and benefits promote "just in time and just enough training" that is offered to students "at their own pace" and "at their own place" (p. 16). In the business world intranet use has become more common than external Internet use. Hall predicts intranet training will become a widely-adopted use of the intranet. The market for multimedia applications delivered over corporate intranets will grow to 19 billion by 2000.

Several factors distinguish the world of education from the world of business. But business operation also includes educating and training employees and, in some cases, customers or potential customers. Consequently, the world of business has led the explorations in Web-based training (WBT). Many of the principles for designing and distributing WBT are not different from methods required to develop and distribute Web-based education.

In the 1980s, companies that trained their employees to use the computer systems and new technologies of the time often distributed training sessions on multimedia CD-roms. With the advent of the intranet many businesses cut back or "downscaled" the material on the CDs to make it lean enough to be distributed via company intranets. Hall (1997) predicts it is only a matter of time before the intranets and the Internet will be capable of handling the full-scale interactive, multimedia lessons that were once built for CDs.

As students gain access to computers and as the transfer rates of Internet connections increase the live-instructor aspects of distance learning can be blended with the self-instructional facilities of computer-based learning. According to Hall (1997) Web-based education consists of three levels: level one consists of text and graphics; level two consists of interactive text and graphics; level three consists of interactive multimedia. The use of e-mail and Web pages in university courses are examples of how level two Web-based education is being incorporated into courses.

Interaction via the Web is a key issue. As Porter (1997) says, "The more interactive you can make the site, the easier learners will understand the course content" (p.139). Porter's *Creating the Virtual Classroom: Distance Learning with the Internet* assists instructors with the process of developing materials that will enhance instruction via the Internet. But she stresses that "a good distance learning program is based on the premise that the subject matter is not fixed, but malleable, and that educators/trainers, as well as the learners, are learning together by sharing information and developing new skills as each course progresses" (p. 199)

Computer requirements for college students

Discussion of the tremendous increase in computer use on university campuses and in high schools typically includes the huge cost of purchasing and upgrading computers (Gilbert, 1996; Green, 1996, IFAS Foundation, 1997). One approach some universities is taking is to require students to provide their own computers.

The University of Florida in Gainesville is the largest Florida public university as of fall 1997 to announce a computer requirement for its students. Beginning with the second semester of the 1998 summer school, all new students (undergraduate and graduate) and all students who have third year status must have access to their own computers (Washington, 1997). Approximately 20,000 students will be affected by the computer requirement for the summer of 1998. Within three years, almost all of UF's

42,000 students will be required to have access to their own computers. The university is estimating students will need to spend an averaged $1,000 per year for computer purchase or leasing.

Part of the rationale for the computer requirement, according to UF, is to encourage students to develop computer skills that will make them competent and better prepared for the job market of the future. Some of these students who will be learning to use computers in the context of their university classroom experience will be the high school journalism teachers of the future, who will be experienced in the use of computer communications and information technology in education.

Methodology

The advisers whose publications and broadcast programs were members of the Florida Scholastic Press Association[2] were selected as the population for the study. The questionnaire developed was four pages, with 29 items. (See Appendix A.) The survey items were in four categories:

1. Demographic information: number of years teaching, certification areas, etc.
2. Computer use at home and at school
3. Experience in taking courses by distance learning
4. Opinions on taking a journalism course via distance learning

Surveys and cover letters were distributed to the 120 advisers attending the 1997 Florida Scholastic Press Association's convention. The surveys and cover letters were included in the packets advisers received when they checked in at the convention registration table. At the advisers' luncheon, an announcement was made to remind advisers to complete the surveys and turn them in. Each adviser who turned in completed

[2] The Florida Scholastic Press Association has more than 420 member publication and broadcast programs. Membership is by publication.

surveys received a computer disk. Only 39 advisers completed the surveys providing a 32% response rate.

The low response rate may have been due to the procedure for distributing and collecting the surveys. In informal follow-up conversations with advisers, some said they never checked their packets or discarded the survey because it was not directly connected with convention activities. Others said they were so busy with convention activities that they did not take the time to complete the survey. A few said they did not complete the survey because they did not use computers or were not interested in taking a course via distance learning.

Findings and Discussion

Demographic information

Of the advisers who completed the survey, 31% said they were certified in journalism. This is an increase in certification level from the 23.9% journalism certification of FSPA advisers found by Evanchyk (1993) and the national level of 28.2% found by Dvorak (1994). The 1997 survey found that 76.9% of the FSPA advisers were certified in English, as compared with 88% of the FSPA advisers in Evanchyk's study (1993) and 78.5% in Dvorak's national survey (1994). The small number of respondents in the 1997 survey of FSPA advisers makes it impossible to draw any conclusions about trends in certification.

Teachers were asked to indicate how many total years they had taught. These figures are compared with the findings of Evanchyk's survey of FSPA advisers (1993):

- 26 percent had taught less than five years (compared with Evanchyk's 16%)
- 10 percent 6 to 10 years (compared with Evanchyk's 27.2%)
- 26 percent had taught 11 to 15 years (compared with Evanchyk's 14.6%)
- 13 percent 16 to 20 years (compared with Evanchyk's 2.7%)
- 26 percent had taught more than 21 years (compared with Evanchyk's 23%)

Teachers were asked to indicate how many years they had been teaching journalism. These figures are compared with the findings of Evanchyk's survey of FSPA advisers (1993):

- 39% had taught journalism for 1-5 years (compared with Evanchyk's 55.9%)
- 26% had taught journalism 6 to 10 years (compared with Evanchyk's 25.8%)
- 18% had taught journalism 11 to 15 years (compared with Evanchyk's 7.6%)
- 8% had taught journalism 16 to 20 years (compared with Evanchyk's 2.7%)
- 7% had taught journalism more than 21 years (compared with Evanchyk's 7.6%)

In Evanchyk's survey, 43.7% had more than five years' journalism teaching experience. The 1997 survey found 59.6% had more than five year's journalism teaching experience. That difference may have been due to the different methodology used in conducting the survey. Evanchyk conducted a mail survey, whereas the 1997 survey was of advisers attending the FSPA convention. The advisers at the convention may be likely to have more journalism teaching experience, as beginning advisers may not be prepared to make all the necessary arrangements (financial and transportation) to take students to a 3-day convention.

The largest number of respondents (35.9%) were within the 30 to 40 year age range with others distributed equally throughout the other age ranges. The overwhelming majority of the respondents (84.6%) were female.

When asked to identify the community they teach in, 33% of the respondents taught in an urban community, 23.1% in a suburban community, 33.4% in a small city, and 10.3% in a rural area. The small number of advisers from rural areas may reflect the lower financial support of rural schools for field trips or may reflect the school composition of the state's schools.

Computer use

Several of the questions asked advisers to indicate their computer use. Of the respondents, the majority use computers for four applications. (See Figure 1.)

- 95% use word processors
- 85% use computers for page design
- 67% use e-mail
- 62% surf the World Wide Web

The majority of advisers (75%) had access to the Internet at home and 56% had access to the Internet at school.

- Almost 75% of respondents indicated they could reach beyond the school's local area network with e-mail
- 56 % had access to the Internet at home -- with 37% using Macintosh computers, 50% using IBM, and 5% using both.

Respondents to the survey said the primary uses of computer online access either at home or at school are to collect resources for teaching (63%) and e-mail (58%). Smaller numbers use online services to download materials and games (21%), chat (18%), and shop (8%).

Distance learning experience

Almost all respondents have taken graduate or certification courses (94%), with 21% having taken a distance education course. Only 5% used e-mail in their distance education class. Television courses were taken by 5% and 10% of the respondents had taken their distance education courses by traditional correspondence.

Respondents indicated they would take a course if it involved: traditional correspondence - 58%; e-mail - 58%; audio tapes - 58%; video tapes - 55%; chat groups - 53%; specific broadcast times - 49%; CD roms - 45%.

When asked "Would you prefer to take a distance education course that was graduate level, undergraduate level or does not matter," 60% said they wanted to take

graduate courses. But 38% indicated they did not have a preference as to whether the course were undergraduate or graduate level.

Seven courses were listed as possible distance learning courses. Advisers were asked to check those of interest and then to list any other possible courses. Of the seven courses listed, three are required for journalism certification in Florida (media writing, law and design). The courses selected by the respondents were: design = 79%, online publications = 63%, media writing = 60%, computer-assisted reporting = 50%, photography = 47%, law = 34%, broadcasting = 26%.

A cross-tab analysis of the respondents found that of those who used word processors 80% indicated they would be interested in learning design and layout via distance education. Of those who said they use computers for online design only 27% said they wanted to learn design. This pattern suggests that many of the advisers are ready to move to the second level of computer applications -- beyond the use of text only to graphics and spatial concepts. It would seem that advisers are ready to use design with computer work; those who have already done this themselves don't feel the need to have a course to teach them.

When respondents were asked what would make them decide to take a journalism course via distance learning: 59% said the time involved in taking the course, 28% said the cost of the course, and 28% said if the course would count toward journalism certification. Those who listed time as a major consideration either did not want the course to conflict with newspaper or yearbook deadlines and work (and suggested the courses might be offered during the summer) or wanted the flexibility to work through the course at their own speed. Other concerns listed included: a need to have interaction with other advisers guaranteed; access to research materials such as a library; accessibility to help; accessibility to equipment; and easily accessible location for orientation classes, if there were such.

Implications

The advisers who participated in the survey indicated an interest in taking college-level journalism courses via distance education. Their responses also indicate that the majority have computer access at school or at home to enable them to take Internet-based courses. So colleges and universities that are looking for a non-traditional market to tap for Web-based courses should consider high school journalism teachers.

As universities determine which courses to develop for Web-based distribution two factors could make high school journalism teachers a less desirable target population for graduate-level courses.

First, most teachers have to pay for college courses themselves -- even those courses they take for certification or recertification. Consequently, the teachers are going to be more concerned about the cost of courses than individuals who take courses and are reimbursed partially or completely by their employers. Web-based courses will cost more than on-site courses, as the additional expenses of course preparation and distribution are passed along to the students in the form of increased tuition.

Second, many higher education institutions are moving toward offering an entire degree program (such as a MBA), not just one or two courses, through Internet-based instruction. So if teachers are taking courses for certification or recertification purposes, they may not be interested in completing an entire graduate degree.

An intriguing idea would be to set up a scholastic journalism education consortium, similar in concept to the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's virtual university but on a much smaller scale. University faculty with special interest in helping train high school journalism teachers could develop a cooperative of courses, with each of the participating universities offering one course.

The purpose of Internet-based journalism education courses would be to help train teachers who because of location, work schedule and/or family responsibilities could not take on-campus courses. Such courses would provide a valuable compliment to the training

offered through undergraduate journalism education programs, journalism courses offered by colleges in special summer programs, and workshop training provided by scholastic press associations at conferences and conventions.

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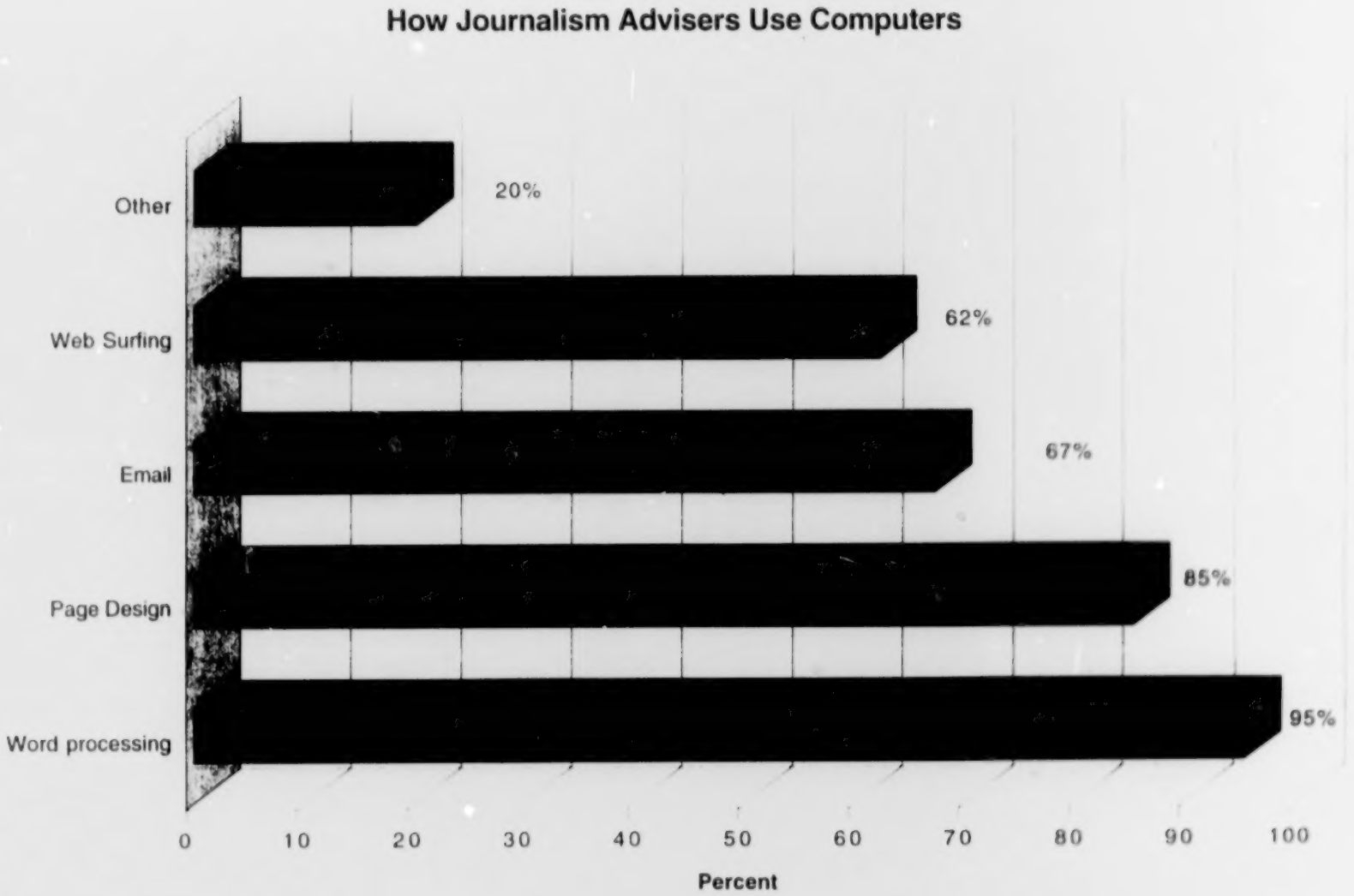
Figure 1



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Appendix

Distance Learning and Florida's High School and Middle School Journalism Teachers

The University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communications is considering offering courses via "distance learning." We very much need information from you to help us make decisions about the potential of such courses. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Thanks.

1. How many years have you been teaching? ____ years

2. Check the description which best reflects your school's community.
___ Urban ___ Suburban ___ Small city ___ Rural

3. How many years have you taught journalism? ____ years

4. Check the areas you are certified in: ___ English ___ Journalism ___ Other

5. Circle your age bracket: under 30 31-40 41-50 51-60 over 60

6. Circle your gender: female male

7. Do you use a computer for: (Check all that apply)
___ Word processing
___ Page design
___ Surfing the World Wide Web
___ E-mail
___ Other (please specify) _____

8. At school, do you have access to e-mail that goes beyond the school? ___ Yes ___ No

9. At school, how much do you use the computer to access on-line services?
___ every day ___ once a month
___ several times a week ___ less than once a month
___ several times a month ___ never

10. If you do not use the computer at school for on-line services, why not?
___ lack time
___ computer not in my classroom
___ lack training in computer use
___ not interested
___ other (please specify) _____

11. At home, do you have access to the Internet? ___ Yes ___ No

12. What kind of computer do you have at home?
___ Macintosh ___ IBM ___ Not sure ___ None

13. At home, how much do you use the computer to access on-line services/
___ every day ___ once a month
___ several times a week ___ less than once a month
___ several times a month ___ never

14. If you do not use the computer at home for on-line services, why not?
___ lack time
___ lack training in computer use
___ not interested
___ other (please specify) _____

15. What do you use an on-line service, at school or at home, to do? (Check all that apply.)
___ Collect resource information for teaching
___ Download programs (games, graphics, etc.)
___ E-mail family or friends
___ Participate in chat groups
___ On-line shopping
___ Other. Explain:

16. Approximately how many graduate courses have you taken? These can be courses taken as apart of a graduate degree or as certification/recertification credit.
___ graduate courses taken as part of a graduate degree
___ courses taken for certification/recertification credit

17. Have you ever taken a college course through correspondence or another distance learning approach? ___ Yes ___ No

If no, please skip to number 23.

If yes, please answer the following questions:

18. Course title _____

19. University/college offering course

20. What did you consider to be the advantages of the distance learning course?

21. What were the disadvantages of the distance learning course?

22. How was the course offered? (Check all that apply.)
___ By correspondence. You mailed assignments to the campus.
___ By e-mail. You sent assignments via e-mail. You could correspond with the instructor via e-mail.
___ By satellite. You met a specified location to watch the course transmission.
___ By television. You watched a televised class.
___ By video tape. You received a video tape of the course that you watched on your own.
___ Other. Please explain.

(Skip to #24)

23. If you haven't taken a course via distance learning, why not?

___ No course offered that I was interested in taking
___ I had not considered the possibility of taking a course through distance learning.
___ I have been told that correspondence courses/distance learning courses do not count as credit toward certification/recertification.
___ I prefer to take classes in a traditional classroom setting for the interaction with the instructor.
___ I prefer to take classes in a traditional classroom setting for the interaction with other students.
___ I prefer to take classes as an opportunity to meet new people.
___ Other. Explain

24. Would you take a University of Florida distance course if it involved (check all that apply):

___ traditional correspondence
___ e-mail
___ chat groups
___ audio tapes
___ video tapes
___ CD-roms
___ set broadcast times at specified central locations
___ meeting with other teachers to view video tapes and discuss

25. Would you prefer to take a distance education course that was

___ graduate level
___ undergraduate level
___ does not matter

26. What subjects for a distance education course would interest you most? (Check all that apply.)

___ broadcasting
___ design
___ law
___ computer assisted reporting
___ media writing
___ online publishing
___ photography
___ other (please specify) _____

27. What would make you decide to take a journalism course via distance learning?

28. What factors should we consider in setting up a distance learning course?

29. If you would be willing to be identified for further interview via phone or e-mail, please include your name and phone or e-mail:

Name:
e-mail address:
Phone:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please return to the "FSPA Office Table" for you disk and a chance to win a surprise gift.